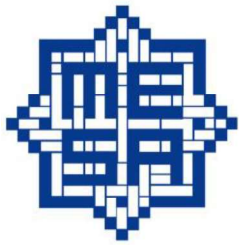


EXHIBIT B



**Middle
East
Studies
Association**
of North America, Inc

Headquarters & Secretariat

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31 March 2025

Alan Garber
President, Harvard University
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Danielle Elisabeth Hoekstra
Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences
Harvard University
fasdean@fas.harvard.edu

David Cutler
Interim Dean of Social Science
Harvard University
socialscidean@fas.harvard.edu

Dear President Garber, Dean Hoekstra and Dean Cutler:

We write on behalf of the Middle East Studies Association of North America (MESA) and its Committee on Academic Freedom to express our deep concern about Harvard University's decision to remove Professor Cemal Kafadar and Associate Professor Rosie Bsheer as, respectively, director and associate director of the university's Center for Middle Eastern Studies (CMES). We regard Harvard's action in this matter as an egregious violation of longstanding and widely accepted norms of faculty governance as well as the principles of academic freedom.

MESA was founded in 1966 to promote scholarship and teaching on the Middle East and North Africa. The preeminent organization in the field, the Association publishes the prestigious *International Journal of Middle East Studies* and has nearly 2,800 members worldwide. MESA is committed to ensuring academic freedom and freedom of expression both within the region and in connection with the study of the region in North America and outside of North America.

Professor Kafadar was appointed CMES director for a three-year term starting 1 July 2022; because he was on leave for the 2024-2025 academic year, he was expected to resume his duties on 1 July 2025 for his third and final year as CMES director. As director, Professor Kafadar worked with CMES-affiliated faculty to organize and co-sponsor geographically and thematically diverse public programming, including the spring 2025 speaker series titled "Reframing Conflict: Palestine, Lebanon, Sudan,



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and Syria in Context.” CMES launched this series on 19 February 2025 with an event titled “An Ongoing Threat: Israel’s War on Lebanon, Past and Present.”

On 10 March 2025 Interim Social Sciences Dean David Cutler requested a Zoom meeting with Professor Kafadar; the meeting took place on 13 March 2025. Professor Kafadar met with Dean Cutler for a second time on 24 March 2025. At these meetings Dean Cutler told Professor Kafadar that Harvard affiliates had complained about the alleged lack of balance and presentation of multiple viewpoints in the 19 February 2025 event on Lebanon. As we understand it, the individuals who complained about this event did not actually attend it. Professor Kafadar explained to Dean Cutler that, as CMES director, he did not interfere with programming decisions made by the faculty members who oversaw the various speaker series sponsored by the center. We note that, in recent years, no Harvard administration official had contacted center leadership to express concerns about its programming.

At 1 p.m. on 25 March 2025, Professor Kafadar was informed that he was no longer CMES director. On 26 March 2025, Associate Director Rosie Bsheer was summoned to meet with Dean Cutler; two days later she, too, was dismissed from her position. The alleged lack of balance in CMES-sponsored events relating to Palestine was cited as the reason for both dismissals.

We note that on 25 March 2025, approximately two hours after Professor Kafadar was dismissed, Dean Hoekstra sent all Harvard center directors a message informing them that the university was adopting a policy requiring that all centers include diverse viewpoints in their programming and that their leaders be prepared to explain how they intended to accomplish this during a mandatory meeting with their respective divisional deans in the coming weeks.

We regard the dismissals of Professors Kafadar and Bsheer as a violation of the norms of university governance and of due process. They constitute unwarranted and unjustifiable political interference by university officials in a domain that should rightly fall within the purview of the scholars affiliated with CMES.

In these fraught times, college and university leaders have a heightened responsibility to protect the freedom of speech and academic freedom of all members of their communities. As



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MESA's Board of Directors put it in a [statement](#) dated 18 December 2023: "We call on university leaders and administrations to affirmatively assert and protect the rights to academic freedom and freedom of speech on their campuses." That statement went on to quote from an earlier Board [statement](#): "We reaffirm that there can be no compromise of the right and ability of students, faculty, and staff at universities across North America (and elsewhere) to express their viewpoints free of harassment, intimidation, and threats to their livelihoods and safety."

In yet another [statement](#), dated 13 March 2025, MESA's board called on colleges and universities to resist demands and pressures by the government and by organized efforts to silence scholarly engagement with the question of Palestine/Israel: "In the current national climate, as institutions of higher education and their mission of critical inquiry face unprecedented attack, MESA unequivocally supports efforts to stand up for freedom of expression, academic freedom, and institutional autonomy. Rather than facilitating or acting in the interests of government repression, we must all take a collective stance to defend higher education in the United States."

We further note that Harvard's decision to remove Professors Kafadar and Bsheer violates its own avowed commitment to freedom of speech and academic freedom, as defined in the [University-Wide Statement of Rights and Responsibilities](#). Ironically, even as Professors Kafadar and Bsheer were being removed from their positions at CMES, apparently to placate those who disagreed with some of the perspectives expressed in its programming, a [statement](#) bearing the signatures of more than 600 Harvard faculty members was released that called on the university to vigorously resist the Trump administration's assault on higher education and forcefully defend Harvard's independence.

We therefore call on Harvard University to immediately rescind the removal of the current leadership of CMES. We further call on you to publicly and vigorously reaffirm the university's commitment to respect and defend the principles of academic freedom and freedom of speech for all members of the Harvard community, and to reject governmental and political pressures to suppress scholarly engagement with, and open discussion of, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

We look forward to your response.



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Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Asli Ü. Bâli'.

Aslı Ü. Bâli

MESA President

Professor, Yale Law School

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Laurie A. Brand'.

Laurie A. Brand

Chair, Committee on Academic Freedom

Professor Emerita, University of Southern California